

CLAIMS

We claim:

A method comprising the steps of:

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- (a) storing in a data store in operative connection with a computer, data representative of a plurality of patients for whom medical items may be used;
 - (b) generating a report, wherein the report includes machine readable indicia corresponding to at least one of the patients;
 - (c) reading the machine readable indicia on the report corresponding to a patient with a reading device;
 - (d) inputting to the computer, data representative of a medical item, wherein the computer is operative to include in the data store, data representative of the taking of the medical item for use by the patient;

- (e) inputting data to the computer representative of giving the medical item to the patient, wherein the computer is operative to include in the data store, data representative of the medical item having been given to the patient.

2. The method according to claim 1 wherein step (a) further comprises storing in the data store, data representative of medical items prescribed for each patient, and wherein step (b) further comprises including on the report, machine readable indicia corresponding to at least one of the medical items prescribed for the patient, and wherein step (d) comprises reading the machine readable indicia corresponding to the medical item with the reading device.

3. The method according to claim 1 wherein step (e) further comprises inputting the data representative of giving the medical item through an input device adjacent the bed of the patient.

4. The method according to claim 3 wherein step (e) comprises inputting the data representative of giving the medical item to a portable terminal, storing data representative of the giving of the medical item in the portable terminal and transferring data representative of the giving of the medical item from the portable terminal to the computer.

5. The method according to claim 3 wherein step (e) further comprises reading machine readable indicia with a reading device.

6. The method according to claim 4 wherein the portable terminal includes a terminal reading device, and wherein in step (e) the inputting of the data representative of giving the medical item includes reading machine readable indicia with the terminal reading device.

7. The method according to claim 6 and prior to step (e) further comprising:

labeling a patient associated item in proximity to the patient with machine readable indicia corresponding to the patient;

and wherein step (e) includes reading the machine readable indicia on the patient associated item with the terminal reading device.

8. The method according to claim 7 wherein the patient associated item includes a band attached to the patient, and wherein step (e) includes reading machine readable indicia on the band with the terminal reading device.

9. The method according to claim 7 wherein the patient associated item includes a bed label attached to a bed of the patient, and wherein step (e) includes reading the machine readable indicia on the bed label with the terminal reading device.

10. The method according to claim 7 wherein the patient associated item includes a bedside chart, and wherein step (e) includes reading the machine readable indicia on the bedside chart with the terminal reading device.

11. The method according to claim 7 wherein step (a) further comprises storing in a data store, data representative of medical items prescribed for the patient, and wherein prior to step (e) the method further comprises generating a prescribed item report with a report generating device, wherein the prescribed item report includes machine readable indicia corresponding to at least one medical item prescribed for the patient, and wherein step (e) includes reading the machine readable indicia corresponding to the medical item from the prescribed item report.

12. The method according to claim 7 wherein step (a) further comprises storing in the data store, data representative of medical items prescribed for the patient, and step (b) further comprises including in the report, machine readable indicia corresponding to at least one medical item prescribed for the patient, and wherein step (e) comprises reading machine readable indicia on the report with the terminal reading device.

13. The method according to claim 4 wherein a docking port is in operative connection with the computer, wherein the portable terminal is operative to communicate with the computer through the docking port, and wherein step (e) includes placing the portable terminal in connection with the docking port, wherein the data representative of the giving of the medical item is transferred from the portable terminal to the computer through the docking port.

14. The method according to claim 1 and prior to step (e) further comprising the step of:

- (f) generating a report responsive to data in the data store, the report including information indicating that the medical item has been taken for use by, but not yet given, to the patient.

15. The method according to claim 14 and prior to step (f) further comprising the steps of:

storing in the data store, data representative of a plurality of authorized users;

inputting data to the computer responsive to one of the plurality of authorized users;

taking the medical item from a storage area, wherein the medical item is taken by the authorized user;

wherein the report generated in step (f) includes information indicative that the authorized user has taken the medical item for use by the patient.

16. A method comprising the steps of:

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- (a) storing in a data store in operative connection with a computer, data representative of a plurality of patients for whom medical items may be used;
- (b) storing in the data store, data representative of a plurality of medical items prescribed for use by corresponding patients;
- (c) inputting to the computer, data corresponding to one of the plurality of patients;
- (d) inputting to the computer, data corresponding to at least one medical item indicated by data in the data store as prescribed for the one patient;
- (e) storing in the data store, data representative that the one medical item has been taken for use by the one patient;
- (f) using the one medical item in the medical treatment of the one patient; and
- (g) inputting data to the computer indicative that the one medical item has been used in the medical treatment of the one patient, wherein the computer is operative to include in the data store, data representative that

the one medical item has been used in the medical treatment of the one patient.

17. The method according to claim 16 and prior to step (c) further comprising the step of generating a report including machine readable indicia indicative of the one patient and the one medical item prescribed for the patient, and wherein step (c) comprises reading with a reading device the machine readable indicia on the report.

18. The method according to claim 17 wherein step (d) comprises reading with a reading device the machine readable indicia on the report.

19. The method according to claim 18 and further comprising dispensing the one medical item from a medical item dispenser responsive to reading the machine readable indicia on the report in step (d).

20. The method according to claim 19 wherein step (e) is executed responsive to the one medical item being dispensed from the dispenser.

21. The method according to claim 19 and prior to the dispensing step, further comprising the steps of:

storing in the data store, data representative of a plurality of authorized users;

inputting to the computer, user data;

comparing the input user data to the data stored concerning authorized users and
determining that the input user data corresponds to one authorized user;

wherein the step of dispensing the one medical item is carried out responsive to
the determination that the input user data corresponds to one authorized user, and
wherein in step (e) the data store includes data representative that the medical
item has been taken by the one authorized user.

22. The method according to claim 16 wherein step (d) comprises storing data in a
portable terminal adjacent a bedside of the patient indicative that the one medical item has been
used in the medical treatment of the one patient, and thereafter placing the portable terminal in
operative connection with the computer, wherein information indicative of the use of the one
medical item in the treatment of the patient is passed from the portable terminal to the computer.

23. The method according to claim 22 wherein step (g) further comprises reading
machine readable indicia on a patient associated item in proximity to the patient with a terminal
reading device in operative connection with the portable terminal, wherein the data indicative
that the one medical item has been given to the patient is stored in the portable terminal
responsive to reading the machine readable indicia on the patient associated item.

24. The method according to claim 23 wherein in step (g) the patient associated item from which the machine readable indicia is read comprises at least one of a band worn by the patient, a bed label or a chart.

25. The method according to claim 16 and further comprising the step of storing data in a bedside terminal adjacent the one patient, indicative that the one medical item has been used in the medical treatment of the one patient.

26. The method according to claim 22 and further comprising the step of:

- (h) storing data in a bedside terminal positioned in generally fixed relation adjacent a bedside area of the one patient, indicative that the one medical item has been used in the medical treatment of the one patient.

27. The method according to claim 26 wherein step (h) includes passing data between the portable terminal and the bedside terminal.